

# Clarke County

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## PLANNING COMMISSION SITE PLAN COMMITTEE

### Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 19, 2016



A meeting of the Planning Commission Site Plan Committee was held at the Berryville/Clarke County Government Center, Berryville, Virginia, on Wednesday, February 19, 2016.

### ATTENDANCE

Robina Bouffault, Cliff Nelson, Anne Caldwell, and Frank Lee

**Absent:** None

**Staff Present:** Ryan Fincham (Senior Planner/Zoning Administrator) and Brandon Stidham (Planning Director)

**Others Present:** Jeremy Tweedie (Greenway Engineering)

### CALLED TO ORDER:

Staff called the meeting to order at 10:04AM.

### Approval of Agenda:

The Committee approved the Agenda by consensus as presented.

### Old Business Items:

None

### New Business Items:

Prior to introducing the special use permit and site plan application for Hecate Energy, Mr. Stidham noted that Staff intends to involve the Site Plan Committee in the review of complex site plans particularly when they involve a special use permit application. He said that an initial Committee meeting will be scheduled within a few weeks of the application filing date and the date of the meeting at which the Planning Commission will be asked to set public hearing or consider the site plan for the first time. He also said that a second Committee meeting will be organized if necessary.

Mr. Stidham provided a brief overview of Hecate Energy's proposal to construct a 20MW solar power plant on the Gibson property in Double Tollgate. He reviewed the applicable sections of the Zoning Ordinance that would govern the evaluation of this application and noted the agencies that would be reviewing it. He advised that comments were requested back from the agencies and the County's engineering consultants within 30 days of routing.

Mr. Tweedie, as engineering consultant for Hecate Energy, provided an overview of the site plan and supporting documentation and answered the members' questions about the plan and the operation of the facility and equipment. Mr. Stidham asked if Mr. Tweedie could provide a profile of the switchgear equipment and Ms. Caldwell asked if an elevation view could be provided of the posts in the ground. Mr. Tweedie indicated that he would provide copies for the Commission. He added that the posts would be driven directly into the ground and would not have concrete pads constructed with them. Mr. Lee asked how the posts would be installed if they encounter rock and Mr. Tweedie replied that they would drill to install the posts. Ms. Caldwell asked what the length of each row of panels would be and Mr. Tweedie replied that they would be 283 feet long. She asked how many posts would be needed to support each row. Mr. Tweedie said 11-12 posts would be needed and approximately 3,000 posts would be installed for the entire project. Commissioners expressed concern about the limestone geology and the likelihood that they will encounter problems with rock during the installation process. Mr. Nelson asked if the site will be re-seeded at the end of construction. Mr. Tweedie replied yes and said that Hecate wants all of the denuded areas to be replanted in grass. Ms. Caldwell noted that this would require significant ongoing mowing and maintenance. Mr. Tweedie said that mowing would likely occur 4-5 times per year.

Ms. Caldwell asked what provisions are in place if the facility goes bankrupt or is discontinued. Mr. Tweedie said that he would have to get Hecate representatives to address this issue. Mr. Stidham noted that a special use permit can be revoked if the project does not commence within two years of approval or is discontinued for one year. Ms. Caldwell asked if a bonding arrangement should be established to ensure that the equipment and structures are removed when the facility is discontinued. Mr. Stidham said that there is a section of the Zoning Ordinance that allows for bonding of public improvements such as extensive entrance construction. He added that there will be a condition on the special use permit to require decommissioning that would allow the County to take legal action to enforce if necessary.

Ms. Caldwell asked about how the panels handle heavy snow loads and the impact of large accumulations of snow between the panel rows. Mr. Tweedie said that he would get additional information to address these questions but he did not think that snow would accumulate in great amounts on the panels.

Mr. Stidham suggested that the Committee should conduct a site visit in particular to look at areas along the property boundary that will require screening. Mr. Tweedie noted that Hecate Energy is specifically concerned about landscaping that could adversely impact the effectiveness of the panels. He also said that the landscaping requirements will require 5,000 shrubs and, from a practical purpose, may not provide effective improvements on the site aesthetics. He added that they propose having Staff inspect the site and identify areas where additional landscaping is needed to provide effective screening from adjacent properties. Ms. Caldwell suggested that consideration could be given to providing a screening fence in certain areas.

Following discussion of the site plan, Mr. Stidham recommended scheduling a date for a site visit. Members agreed to meet on Friday, February 26 at 1:00PM. He added that the Committee would not have to formally advertise this meeting and could recess this meeting until the site visit.

**Approval of Minutes:**

The Committee voted to approve the May 20, 2015 Minutes as presented.

**Yes:** Lee (seconded), Caldwell, Bouffault (moved)

**No:** None

**Abstained:** Nelson

**Other Business:**


Mr. Fincham noted that Staff has been working on a couple of administrative site plans to co-locate antennas on existing monopoles as well as some minor subdivision applications. He also noted that there may be an upcoming FOC-zoned subdivision request that would fall under the newly adopted subdivision regulations. Mr. Stidham added that if the Board of Supervisors adopts the outdoor recreation facility text amendment in March, the lighting plan that would be filed for Chet Hobert Park would be reviewed administratively by Staff.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was recessed at 11:07AM until the Committee's site visit scheduled for 1:00PM on Friday, February 26, 2016.

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**RECESSED MEETING – February 26, 2016**

The Committee reconvened the recessed meeting at 1:00PM on Friday, February 26, 2016 at the site of the proposed solar facility in Double Tollgate (Gibson property, Tax Map #27-A-5). Members present included Robina Bouffault, Frank Lee, and Cliff Nelson. Anne Caldwell was absent from this meeting. Others present included Brandon Stidham (Planning Director), Ryan Fincham (Senior Planner/Zoning Administrator), and Jeremy Tweedie (Greenway Engineering). The Committee toured the site and asked questions about the proposed project. No action was taken by the Committee during this site visit.



Brandon Stidham, Clerk